

Waukegan, IL - For the second holiday season, first responders from Waukegan and North Chicago's police and fire departments joined U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) for a special party in Waukegan to thank them for their service and to honor outstanding acts of heroism.

"On behalf of our communities, I am proud to formally thank the men and women who wear the uniform here in Lake County," Congressman Kirk said. "During the holidays, we count our blessings -- among them are our first-responder heroes that we honor tonight."

Joined by Waukegan Mayor Richard Hyde and North Chicago Mayor Leon Rockingham, Kirk gave special recognition to three first responders for going "*above and beyond the call of duty*."

Kirk awarded the first "Congressional Recognition for Heroism" certificate to **Waukegan Police Detective Monty Hall**, a member of the Neighborhood Enforcement Team (NET)

In June, Detective Hall's investigative work resulted in the arrest of a violent gang member living steps away from Juarez Middle School.

Detective Hall developed sources, witnessed narcotic sales and obtained a search warrant.

When the Waukegan Police NET Team executed the warrant, the gang member was snorting cocaine, loading a pistol and in possession of 4,000 grams of marijuana and 20 grams of cocaine.

“Detective Hall and Waukegan’s NET team are heroes. Their efforts took an armed gang leader selling drugs steps from a school off our streets.

I am proud to support his work protecting kids and keeping our communities safe,
” said Kirk.

Kirk next recognized **Firefighter/Paramedic Paul Rice**. Rice has been with Waukegan Fire Department for four years. Firefighter
Rice earned Waukegan Fire Department’s ‘Firefighter of the Year’ award in 2005, and the ‘100 Club of Lake County Firefighter of the Year’ in 2006.

In 2005, Rice was deployed to Louisiana to support relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina. Rice used his skills as a mechanic to repair Fire Service Apparatus.

Rice also served in the Marine Corps Reserve as a machine gunner during a recent tour in the Middle East.

“When the people of New Orleans needed him most, Firefighter Rice went to help his fellow Americans,” said Kirk.

Congressman Kirk closed the evening’s activities by recognizing North Chicago **Police Officer Eric Martin**. Officer Martin is the lead investigator on the department’s Domestic Violence Taskforce.

Martin’s unique skills working with victims of domestic abuse brought empathy and professionalism to difficult situations.

“Eric helped mothers and wives through a difficult time. He gave them a voice and helped them find justice against an attacker,” Kirk said.

Congressman Kirk has worked closely with the police and fire departments in Waukegan and North Chicago. He has joined the Waukegan Police Department on numerous ‘ride- alongs’ to get a first hand look at law enforcement issues facing community police forces.

Last April, Congressman Kirk announced a \$100,000 grant for the Waukegan Police Department to combat gang activity.

The announcement was held at Juarez Middle School.

The congressman has also secured grants to upgrade equipment for Waukegan’s Fire

Department.

Kirk's holiday party has become an annual event to honor first responders in these communities.